UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/52/1022
26 August 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-second session
Agenda item 58

RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Letter dated 21 August 1998 from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the President of the General Assembly

You will recall that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, inter alia, invited the Economic and Social Council to review the composition, functions and working methods of its functional commissions and bodies, as well as the recommendations of the Secretary-General relating to the reform of its subsidiary bodies, and to report thereon to the General Assembly during its fifty-second session.

In pursuance of these mandates, the Economic and Social Council carried out extensive consultations and, at its recent substantive session, adopted resolution 1998/46 on 31 July 1998. The Council further decided to bring the resolution to the attention of the General Assembly (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could bring the content of the resolution to the attention of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

(Signed) Juan SOMAVÍA

98-25346 (E) 030998

/...

ANNEX

Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and 52/12 B of 19 December 1997,

1. Adopts the texts contained in the annexes to the present resolution;

2. Expresses its appreciation to the functional commissions for the interest they have taken in reviewing their working methods and encourages them to continue to do so, taking into account the suggestions and recommendations appearing in annex II to the present resolution and to adopt practices best suited to their mandates, priorities and responsibilities;

3. Welcomes the reform measures undertaken by the regional commissions and encourages them to continue to undertake, under the aegis of their respective intergovernmental bodies, further measures to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness;

4. Decides to continue its deliberations on pending issues pursuant to the mandates given to it, as contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B;

5. Also decides to hold, at its resumed substantive session of 1998, elections for the composition of the bodies as laid down in annex I to the present resolution, so that these bodies are fully constituted from 1 January 1999; and requests the Bureau to work out appropriate mechanism for the holding of the elections for this purpose;

6. Further decides to bring the present resolution to the attention of the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 70 of annex I to Assembly resolution 50/227 and paragraphs 9 and 10 of Assembly resolution 52/12 B.

ANNEX I

A. Commission on Science and Technology for Development

1. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development shall remain a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, and shall continue to meet biennially for two weeks.

2. The Commission is encouraged to sharpen the focus of its work, devoting particular attention to the issues of transfer of technology and capacity-building, in particular of the developing countries. In regard to technology transfer, examination of concrete applications/activities is encouraged.

3. Effective coordination shall be established with all other functional commissions and with the Economic and Social Council. The Commission should concentrate in particular on working closely with the Commission on Sustainable Development and with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development/Trade and Development Board. Methods to be employed to enhance these linkages should include the following:

(a) Closer communication should be established between the Bureaux of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development as well as with other Bureaux of the functional commissions, as appropriate;

(b) Regular communication should take place between the secretariats/offices servicing the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development/Trade and Development Board;

(c) The outcome of the meetings of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development should continue to be made available to the States Members of the United Nations, including through briefings to delegations in Geneva and New York by the Bureau and secretariat of the Commission;

(d) The outcome of the meetings of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development should be shared for information purposes with all relevant functional commissions and other relevant United Nations bodies.

4. The coordination between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and other relevant United Nations bodies, including the regional commissions, should be improved and made more effective.

5. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development shall continue to serve as the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. The Commission should make maximum use of the expertise that the secretariat of the Conference can offer, while also drawing, as appropriate, on expertise from elsewhere in the United Nations system, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and relevant specialized agencies.

6. The membership of the Commission is to be reduced from fifty-three to thirty-three with the following geographical distribution: eight members from African States; seven members from Asian States; six members from Latin American and Caribbean States; four members from Eastern European States; and eight members from Western European and other States. The term of office is to be four years.

B. Committee for Development Planning

7. The Committee for Development Planning shall be renamed the Committee for Development Policy and shall continue to be a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council.

8. It shall comprise twenty-four independent experts with a good mix of expertise, who are to be drawn from the fields of economic development, social development and environmental protection, in order to avoid the need to engage the assistance of consultants and so as to reflect an adequate geographical and gender balance. Membership should include those who are able to contribute on emerging issues and to the multilateral process. The experts should be nominated by the Secretary-General, after consultation with interested Governments, and approved by the Economic and Social Council. The term of office is to be three years.

9. The Committee shall continue the triennial review of the status of least developed countries, and shall meet on this issue once every three years.

10. The Economic and Social Council should decide on an appropriate work programme for the Committee for Development Policy. In January/February of each year, the Council, at the time of deciding the themes for its substantive session, should advise the Committee about the theme(s) to be considered at the Committee's annual session, not to exceed five working days, to be held in April/May. The Committee will submit its report to the Council at its substantive session in July. The report will also include the Committee's proposals to the Council concerning its work programme for the following year, for consideration and approval at the next organizational session of the Council in January/February.

11. The General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council can also propose, through the Council, issues for consideration by the Committee for Development Policy.

12. Dissemination of information on the Committee's work should be improved, including, inter alia, by establishing an Internet Web site and through a presentation by its Bureau on the outcome of its deliberations.

13. In undertaking its responsibilities, the Committee on Development Policy should, in addition to holding its formal meetings, explore the scope for effective preparations for their deliberations via informal networking arrangements. The Secretariat should provide assistance in this regard.

C. Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development

D. Committee on Natural Resources

14. The two Committees shall be merged into a single expert body to be named the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development which shall serve as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council.

15. The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development should comprise, with due attention to geographical representation and gender balance, two sub-groups of twelve experts nominated by Governments and approved by the Economic and Social Council. One sub-group should deal with issues relating to energy, the other with issues relating to water resources. The geographical

distribution is to be as follows: six members from African States; five members from Asian States; four members from Latin American and Caribbean States; three members from Eastern European States; and six members from Western European and other States. The term of office is to be four years.

16. The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development shall meet biennially for two weeks on the understanding that the days available should be divided evenly in a flexible manner between the two sub-groups.

17. Upon the recommendation of both or either of the expert groups of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, the Economic and Social Council may decide modalities for the establishment of ad hoc expert groups, when necessary, to consider issues relating to minerals.

18. In addition, the General Assembly may invite the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the regional commissions to consider effective ways to address, within their respective competences, relevant aspects of this issue.

19. In formulating its programme of work, to be presented to the Economic and Social Council for consideration and decision, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development should take into full account the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, so as to ensure that its own work programme will be structured in a manner that could enable it to contribute to the work of the Commission. The Council, in considering and deciding on the work programme of the Committee, should ensure the special relationship between the Committee and the Commission and a coherence between their respective work programmes. For its part, the Commission is requested to consider which aspects of its multi-year work programme the Committee can usefully address.

20. The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development should maintain close links with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, as appropriate.

ANNEX II

FUNCTIONAL COMMISSIONS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL WITH SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES

1. The General Assembly in its resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B mandated review by the Economic and Social Council of the Council's functional commissions.[1] In recent years, the functional commissions have taken an interest in reviewing their own working methods and should continue to do so, benefiting from the experience gained. Each commission should be encouraged to adopt practices best suited to its mandate and responsibilities. In this respect, the following general suggestions and recommendations are provided by the Economic and Social Council to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the functional commissions.

A. Working methods

2. Bearing in mind the interlinkages of issues and their cross-cutting nature, there is a need for the functional commissions to strengthen their coordination, while paying careful attention to the mandates and terms of reference of each commission. The Economic and Social Council has to play a key role in this process. In this context, adoption of multi-year thematic programme for the functional commissions responsible for follow-up to the major conferences can be helpful.

3. For those functional commissions that have more than one theme for discussion, sufficient time should be allocated for each of the priority themes so as to enable Member States to have focused and in-depth discussions, bearing in mind the interlinkages between the priority themes.

4. Inter-sessional meetings can help to focus a commission's work by identifying key elements to be discussed and important problems to be addressed within a specific item pertaining to that work. These meetings should contribute to the preparations for the meeting of a functional commission, but should not be a substitute for intergovernmental debates in the context of the meeting of the commission itself.

5. Meetings hosted and funded by Governments can also provide useful inputs to the work of functional commissions, in relation to their respective work programmes.

---

[1] The functional commission of the Economic and Social Council entrusted with the follow-up to major United Nations conferences are the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development, and the Commission on Human Settlements. Although the Commission on Human Settlements is a standing committee, the collective term "functional commissions" is used throughout the present annex.

6. The work of the commission should be organized in such a way as to enable agenda items that may lead to negotiated outcomes to be introduced early, so that there is sufficient time for informal consultation on the outcomes.

7. To avoid duplication or overlap, functional commissions may also be encouraged to request through the Economic and Social Council, as appropriate, that another functional commission be charged to look into an issue under consideration by the commission making the request, without overloading the other commission's work programme. Functional commissions may be encouraged to request through the Council, as appropriate, additional inputs from other functional commissions on issues of interest to the commission making the request.

8. Functional commissions should make better use of panels of experts which should have balanced representation so as to facilitate consideration of substantive issues. As far as possible, synopses of statements that panellists propose to make should be circulated to Member States sufficiently in advance to facilitate a well-prepared dialogue. Care should be taken to ensure that panel members focus their presentations on the agenda item(s) under discussion, and not on a related subject, so that adequate time is available for dialogue. Bureaux should ensure that the time allocated to the intergovernmental debate is adequate.

9. Functional commissions should also explore ways to exchange national experiences and best practices in the implementation of effective conference follow-up, including through voluntary national presentations of country experiences and interactive dialogues. The dialogues should focus in particular on lessons learned from national-level conference follow-up. It is also necessary that the Secretariat provide Member States with the highlights of such best practices and lessons learned.

10. Bearing in mind the importance of the general debate in providing useful input for the themes under discussion, the functional commissions should ensure that the debate is focused, adds value and contributes to action-oriented outcomes of the session.

11. Functional commissions must ensure that they add value to the process of implementing the programmes of action adopted by the major global conferences. The commissions should therefore focus on:

(a) Deliberating on the progress achieved and constraints faced as well as action-oriented recommendations on the conference outcomes at the national and international levels;

(b) Fostering the exchange of local, national and regional experiences on implementing conference outcomes;

(c) Reviewing progress achieved at the national and international levels on specific issues under their multi-year work programmes through appropriate reporting systems, so as to draw attention to common experiences, successful approaches and areas of particular difficulty, and to identify new and emerging issues that require priority attention;

(d) Producing clear, concise and action-oriented outcomes of their deliberations.

12. The voluntary submission of national information, including, for example, information in the form of periodic communications or national reports by Governments, represents a valuable contribution to the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the recommendations of relevant conferences. The Economic and Social Council should reiterate its request to the Secretary-General to prepare a standardized and simplified format, which could be used by Governments in preparing information on a single subject or on clusters of subjects.

13. Functional commissions should mainstream a gender perspective in their work by fully implementing agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council,[2] in particular the sixteenth paragraph thereof.

B. Role of the Bureau

14. The Bureau plays a crucial role in the successful outcome of, and in facilitating the preparation for, the meeting. The incoming Bureau should preferably be elected immediately after the conclusion of the previous session of the commission, as appropriate. Therefore, early designation by regional groups of their candidatures, especially for the position of Chairman, is important.

15. Inter-sessional meetings of the Bureau are very useful and important in preparing for the upcoming session. Regular and informal open-ended briefings by the Bureau, in conjunction with the Secretariat and the Member States, on the preparation for the session, need to be further encouraged. In order to enable the Bureau to carry out its functions effectively, consideration should be given to providing appropriate financial support, through extrabudgetary contributions, to members of the Bureau, particularly from the developing countries, so as to enable them to participate in the meetings of the Bureau, in inter-sessional meetings of the commission and in the sessions of the commission itself.

16. The Bureaux of the functional commissions, along with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council, are encouraged to enhance coordination, in particular through regular meetings whenever necessary. In addition to meeting, Bureaux should explore the scope for coordination via informal networking arrangements. The Secretariat should provide assistance in this regard.

17. The Bureaux of the functional commissions should conduct transparent and open-ended consultations with Member States, with a view to seeking guidance from and ensuring greater involvement of, Member States in the preparatory work of the sessions of the commissions.

---

[2] See A/52/3, chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.

C. Participation

18. The participation of officials from capitals responsible for the specific follow-up to United Nations conferences, as well as experts, should be encouraged. High-level participation is desirable and will be facilitated by enhancing the quality of deliberations in the functional commissions.

19. Participation of other relevant entities of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other specialized agencies, should be encouraged, where appropriate.

20. Functional commissions entrusted with conference follow-up have benefited from the breadth of expertise of non-governmental organizations and the capacity of those organizations to support the work of the United Nations. Bearing in mind Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996, functional commissions should take into account in their deliberations the full diversity of the views of non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international levels. Efforts should be made to facilitate the balanced participation of non-governmental organizations from developed and developing countries.

D. Documentation

21. Reports should be concise, coherent and analytical in order to facilitate a focused discussion and a productive outcome.

22. Reports should contain clear and action-oriented recommendations, which would enhance effective implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences.

23. The availability of reports through electronic format, though desirable, should not substitute for hard-copy reports which must be made available in a timely manner in all official United Nations languages, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/214 B of 22 December 1997.

24. In the preparatory process, the convening of workshops, seminars, round tables and panel of experts focusing on the priority themes may provide many useful ideas in the preparation of documentation and, therefore, should be given appropriate consideration. In this context, it is important that efforts should be made to facilitate the participation of experts from developing countries in such forums. Consultations with other relevant actors, including non-State actors, when possible and as appropriate, can be useful in the preparation of reports.

25. In the preparation of reports by the Secretariat for the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Council's subsidiary bodies, the Secretary-General should continue to make use, when appropriate, of the practice of designating task managers, so that a particular United Nations agency would be responsible for coordinating the response of the entire United Nations system on a given subject, including the formulation of recommendations for future action. All relevant bodies in the United Nations system should be involved in

the preparatory process, as appropriate. Where necessary, task forces, reporting to an assigned manager, should be established to facilitate coordination of inputs.

26. An early exchange of views by/with the Secretariat and Member States on the preparation of reports can be helpful in strengthening their content. The Bureau should monitor timely preparation.

27. To allow more time for the Member States to interact with each other, the introduction of the reports by the Secretariat should be kept to the minimum length necessary and, whenever possible, a group of related documents should be introduced together.

28. Recommendations in the reports should focus on steps taken and measures required to enhance the full implementation of conference outcomes at the national and international levels, and clearly identify those actions that are required for a coordinated United Nations system-wide response. In preparing such reports, the Secretariat should draw on the experiences gained by Member States in their national implementation of follow-up to conferences, bearing in mind that the reporting on national implementation of conference outcomes is the responsibility of Governments. In this regard, support provided by the international community should also be included. The Secretariat should also draw on the experience gained by the United Nations system in assisting implementation at the field level, including through the resident coordinator system. Input from the resident coordinator system should be prepared in full consultation with the national Government.

29. The Secretariat is requested to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation and to ensure that the intergovernmental machinery is made aware of the decisions and recommendations of the relevant bodies in relation to gender mainstreaming.

30. Functional commissions, at the conclusion of each session, should consider and decide, upon recommendation of their Bureaux, whether their outputs might be relevant to the work of other functional commissions and, if so, request the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council to arrange for this material to be brought to the attention of the other commissions in a timely manner. Functional commissions could also consider whether the reports of other functional commissions are relevant to their work and, if so, request the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council to arrange for this material to be made available to them.

E. Outcome/reporting

31. The format of the outcomes of the meetings will vary from one functional commission to another, but the outcome should be focused and concise, should contain concrete recommendations and actions, based on intergovernmental deliberations and negotiations, and should not be intended as a redefinition of the already agreed documents of the major conferences.

32. The Secretariat should produce a consolidated report for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council that looks at linkages between the functional commissions. This report should highlight the key points on which the Council needs to consider taking action.

33. The Economic and Social Council should, for its part, ensure that it reviews the above-mentioned recommendations, concentrating in particular on horizontal or cross-cutting issues, with a view in particular to ensuring consistency between recommendations presented by different functional commissions. Within the agreed outputs, the functional commissions should clearly identify any recommendations that have coordination, programmatic or budgetary implications for the United Nations.

34. The Member States should be given ample time to negotiate the outcome of the meetings.

35. While recognizing the right of any Member State to introduce draft resolutions or decisions that it deems necessary, functional commissions should be encouraged to utilize agreed outputs that serve to integrate the particular sectoral concerns that may arise within the overall framework of the follow-up to a global conference, as appropriate.

F. Relations with the Economic and Social Council

36. The Economic and Social Council should focus on improving the effectiveness of the functional commissions, including their role as instruments for conference follow-up, through better working methods and harmonization of their multi-year work programmes. The Council should monitor on a yearly basis the steps taken by functional commissions in response to Council recommendations on the harmonization of work programmes. The Council should also monitor annually the way in which its functional commissions mainstream a gender perspective on the basis of the report on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

37. The Economic and Social Council should ensure that general discussion in the functional commissions on cross-cutting issues common to major United Nations conferences should be within their respective areas of competence and within their multi-year programmes of work in order to foster the discussion of such issues by the Council and the General Assembly.

38. The Economic and Social Council needs to be fully informed of the coordinating work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination so that it can ensure that the functional commissions are aware in a timely manner of the work of the Committee related to the follow-up to the major global conferences.

G. Interrelationship between functional commissions

39. As agreed in Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/61 of 25 July 1997, cooperation among functional commissions should be supported and

enhanced by the Bureau of the Council with the assistance of the respective secretariats of the functional commissions.

H. Relations with the regional commissions and other relevant regional bodies

40. The regional commissions have been given specific mandates for the follow-up to the major global conferences, and they have an important role to play in this regard.

41. Bearing in mind the important role of the regional commissions and other regional bodies in implementing the outcome of the major global conferences, their contribution should be reflected in the work of the functional commissions.

ANNEX III

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

1. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B, mandated a review by the Economic and Social Council of the regional commissions. The commissions, in response to Assembly resolution 50/227 and Council resolution 1996/41 of 26 July 1996, as well as on their own initiatives, have carried out reforms with differences in content and scope, in accordance with specificities of each region, aimed at achieving greater relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.

2. The Economic and Social Council welcomes the reform measures undertaken by the commissions and encourages them to continue to undertake, as appropriate, under the aegis of their respective intergovernmental bodies, further measures in this regard.

3. The Economic and Social Council recognizes that each regional commission operates in a different economic and institutional environment and that regional commissions should therefore continue to respond to regional needs as reflected in the priorities set by members of the respective commissions.

4. Bearing this in mind, as well as the role of the regional commissions within the United Nations system in their respective regions as mandated in section IV of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, the following guidance is provided by the Economic and Social Council with respect to improving the commissions' contributions and relevance in the reform process of the United Nations, in accordance with the mandates and priorities of each of the commissions.

A. The regional commissions as regional outposts of the United Nations

5. According to regional needs and circumstances, the regional commissions fulfil norm-setting, dissemination and analytical functions as well as undertake operational activities that are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The regional commissions provide an important forum for articulating regional perspectives on global issues, and for building consensus within their respective regions. This capacity should be utilized more fully by United Nations bodies, funds and programmes, as appropriate.

6. Linking the activities of the regional commissions more effectively with the overall activities of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors should be pursued vigorously. The active involvement and participation of the Executive Secretaries of the commissions, or their representatives, in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group should be effectively ensured.

7. The undertaking of joint exercises in accordance with their respective mandates and priorities should be encouraged between each of the secretariats of the commissions, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development secretariat on the basis of memoranda/letters of understanding and should be reflected in their respective programmes of work.

8. An important role has been given to the regional commissions in the preparations for and follow-up to major United Nations conferences in accordance with their respective mandates and priorities. The Economic and Social Council should provide overall guidance for the work of the regional commissions in this area, bearing in mind the need for a multisectoral approach.

9. The Economic and Social Council welcomes the ongoing exercises in some of the regional commissions on priority-setting, and encourages the other regional commissions to carry out similar activities. The involvement of Governments in this process should help the commissions achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency.

10. Improving coordination of the activities of the regional commissions and various United Nations entities operating at the regional level, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, within their respective mandates and priorities, is particularly important. This should be further addressed through the following concrete measures:

(a) Reactivation of the United Nations Development Programme/regional commissions task force for the purpose of addressing, more effectively, issues of common concern;

(b) Closer consultation of the regional commissions by the United Nations Development Programme during the programming stages of its regional activities, with the Programme considering the commissions to be partners in the undertaking of those activities. The secretariats of the regional commissions should make

available to the relevant offices of the Programme, in particular the regional bureaux, their respective programmes of work.

11. The potential for active involvement of the regional commissions in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework should be reviewed in the ongoing pilot phase of the Framework.

B. The regional commissions as part of their respective regional institutional landscape

12. The role of the regional commissions as part of the institutional landscape of their respective regions calls for close cooperation between the commissions and other relevant regional bodies in order to reinforce synergies and complementarities between their respective programmes of work. The regional commissions are encouraged to intensify their cooperation and regular exchange of information, as determined by their respective intergovernmental bodies, with relevant regional bodies, institutions and networks. When holding meetings with their respective regional bodies and institutions, the regional commissions should ensure that such meetings concentrate on specific issues for which a regional coordinated approach is desirable and reflect the mandates and priorities of the regional commissions.

13. The team leadership role of the regional commissions calls for their holding regular inter-agency meetings in each region with a view to improving coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system in that region. In this respect, the Economic and Social Council welcomes the efforts by the Secretary-General to improve coordination within the United Nations system, including his proposal of yearly meetings, to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General in each geographical area, among the relevant entities of the United Nations system engaged in regional and intercountry activities. These meetings should be cost-effective and built up on already existing coordination mechanisms and should focus on specific issues requiring coordination at the regional level. The outcome of these meetings should be reported to the Council through the respective intergovernmental bodies of the regional commissions, as appropriate. In this regard, the Council encourages the Secretary-General to take into account these resources in his report under the agenda item entitled "Regional Cooperation" in 1996.

C. Role of the Economic and Social Council

14. The Economic and Social Council should encourage the regular exchange of information, as appropriate, between the bureaux of the regional commissions and its own Bureau. Whenever possible, the participation of the chairpersons of the regional commissions in the relevant deliberations of the Council should be welcomed. The Council should also encourage the participation of the Executive Secretaries, when feasible, in its high-level debates and should further encourage inputs from the regional commissions in its substantive consideration of global issues with a regional dimension, including through the utilization of the Regional Commissions New York Office. Regular briefings of the Council by the Executive Secretaries should be organized during the meetings of the

Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group. The Council should also encourage better two-way flow of information on activities of the regional commissions, including through simultaneous launching of the economic and social surveys, in New York and at the seats of the regional commissions.

15. The Economic and Social Council should also encourage regular interaction between the regional commissions in order for them to share each other's best practices, experiences and concrete achievements. The Council should also encourage interregional cooperation involving two or more regional commissions, as well as the United Nations Development Programme, when appropriate.

16. The Economic and Social Council should promote greater cooperation between the regional commissions and its functional commissions through regular exchange of information supported by their respective secretariats, as appropriate.

17. The Economic and Social Council should maintain its oversight and coordination role to ensure that decisions taken by the intergovernmental bodies of the regional commissions and the United Nations funds and programmes are complementary and mutually supportive.

18. The Economic and Social Council should encourage the exchange of information and cooperation between the regional commissions and the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization on issues of common interest.